SPIDER-MAN®

MARVEL SELECT®

#2
SEPT

THE LOST YEARS

DEMATTEIS
ROMITA JR.
JANSON

JRJR
JANSON

Let's get this straight -- I'm a NEW YORKER down to every last cell in my body.

During my five years of wandering, I wasn't just missing the PEOPLE I left behind... I was missing the TOWN. No other place on earth has that mix of high class and low comedy. Culture and chaos.

But I'd be lying if I didn't acknowledge that the face of the city was pocked with dark and dangerous places.

During the years I wore the Spider suit, I'd BEEN in most of them...

...knee deep in sewage, fighting for my life.

Maybe that's why I fell in love with SALT LAKE.

It seemed like a throwback to a more innocent time. When streets were clean, people had a smile and a kind word for each other...

... and the world was pregnant with hope.

SO WHADDAYA THINK, JACK? SHOULD WE WHACK THE COP NOW --

-- OR BEAT HIS BRAINS OUT SOME MORE?

For a man like me, running so long, so far -- hope was a precious commodity.

I DUNNO, BULL. LET'S ASK HIM.

HEY, DETECTIVE -- YOU WANT WE SHOULD KILL YA NOW -- OR LATER?

HE DON'T SEEM T' BE ANSWERIN', BULL.

HEY, COP -- MY MAN ASKED YOU A QUESTION!

ANSWER HIM!

SKRUK

Jacob Raven was a man who believed in hope. In the promise of better tomorrows. In a God who wasn't angry or vengeful -- but compassionate and kind.

Which is why he was so appalled when VINCENT TANNEN and his mob moved in... pock-marking SALT LAKE'S face with alarming speed.

HEY -- WHUZZAT?

STILL NOT TALKING, HUH? GEEZ --

-- YOU'D THINK THE GUY HAD A GAG ON OR SOME-THIN'!

HAW HAW HAW

I think he believed in his CITY most of all.

So he set himself a task: take Tannen down. Drive the snake out of Paradise.

He'd done pretty well, too.

Until that night.

Until they kidnapped Raven, blew up his house...

... and his wife and son with it.

PART TWO: INTIMACIES

LOOKS LIKE SOME JERK WANTS T'GET HIMSELF RUN OVER.

HEY -- NO PROBLEM. I LIVE T'--

-- PLEASE?

I never intended to get involved.

WHERE'D HE GO?

MUSTA JUMPED OUTTA THE WAY JUST IN --

KRASH

I'd come to Salt Lake to lay low for a while. Make a little money. Then get on my bike and keep moving.

Understand: Those were the days when I didn't know I was the REAL Peter Parker.

WHO THE %#$$ IS THAT?!

WHAT'S GOIN' ON HERE?!

I thought I was his CLONE. A genetic counterfeit with implanted memories -- and no particular right to exist.

SONOVA--! HE GRABBED RAVEN!

FIND HIM!

FIND 'EM BOTH --

-- OR TANNEN'S GONNA HAVE OUR HEADS!

KAK CHUKK KRUNK

TOMMY?!

DANNY?!

I had no desire to play the hero. I wasn't Parker anymore. Far as I knew, I NEVER WAS.

YOU SEE 'EM, BULL?

CAN'T SEE NOTHIN' WITH THIS BLASTED RAIN!

I was BEN REILLY.

And I just wanted to be left alone.

Of course, I learned pretty early in life that we don't often get what we want.

KR UNCH!

YAARR--!

JACK -- YOU OKAY, MAN?

JACK--?!

What we NEED is another matter.

YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM ME, DETECTIVE.

AND THE INSTANT I HEARD HIS VOICE...

...I KNEW THAT I DIDN'T.

I WANTED TO CALL OUT TO HIM, ASK WHO HE WAS, HOW HE'D MANAGED TO TAKE OUT TANNEN'S MUSCLE WITHOUT WORKING UP A SWEAT...

...BUT THEN I HEARD THE SIRENS, COMING CLOSER. SAW THE LIGHTS, SWEEPING THROUGH THE DARKNESS AND THE RAIN.

AND THAT'S WHEN THE FEAR **REALLY** BEGAN... PULSING THROUGH MY HEAD, TIGHTENING MY CHEST, TYING MY STOMACH IN KNOTS.

JACOB!

I SHOULD HAVE BEEN RELIEVED TO SEE THEM ALL. TO SEE MY PARTNER, **LOUISE**, MOST OF ALL. BUT ALL I **FELT** WAS FEAR. VAGUE. NAMELESS. AND ALL THE MORE UNSETTLING **BECAUSE** OF IT.

YOU OKAY?

HOW'D YOU *FIND* ME?

I'LL EXPLAIN LATER. RIGHT NOW WE'VE GOTTA GET YOU TO THE *HOSPITAL*.

I'M *FINE*, LOUISE. I DON'T NEED ANY --

IT'S NOT FOR **YOU**, JACOB. I'M **SORRY**, BUT --

-- IT'S YOUR *WIFE*... AND YOUR *BOY*.

I WANTED TO SCREAM -- BUT THE FEAR HAD ME BY THE *THROAT*.

AND IT DIDN'T LET GO.

POWER -- and RESPONSIBILITY.

MY responsibility.

Whether I liked it or not.

There I was, in town for less than twenty-four hours, and I'd already been in the thick of it. Running around in that make-shift costume. Wailing on the bad guys.

Was it an ADDICTION? I wondered. Was I so hooked on Spider-Man's power that --

POWER. That's what it always came down to, wasn't it?

I ALMOST CRIED OUT FOR HIM TO STOP.

...HAD OPENED A DOORWAY INSIDE ME. AND ON THE OTHER *SIDE* OF THAT DOORWAY WAS A WILD, ILLOGICAL THING CALLED...

...HOPE.

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE *PROFESSOR WARREN* HATCHED ME FROM PARKER'S CELLS, I ALLOWED MYSELF TO BELIEVE THAT I COULD FIND A SMALL MEASURE OF HAPPINESS...

...IN THIS COLD AND UGLY WORLD.

"...IN THE *NOW.*"

I HAD TO LAUGH AT MYSELF. WHAT WAS I *THINKING?* HAD I SUDDENLY LOST ALL SENSE?

IF I HAD, IT WAS BECAUSE OF HER: *LOUISE KENNEDY.*

IT WAS AS IF MEETING HER, BEING WITH HER, LOSING MYSELF IN THE SCENT AND SWEAT AND FEEL OF HER...

"REILLY," I WANTED TO SAY, " LET'S *KILL* THE PAST." *DESTROY* THE FUTURE. STAND, FACE-TO-FACE, AS FRIENDS...

HAPPINESS?

A TERRIFYING THOUGHT. I'D ONLY KNOWN *SUFFERING* IN MY BRIEF LIFE. IT WASN'T EASY. BUT IT *WAS* FAMILIAR. *COMFORTING*...

...IN AN ODD, PERVERTED WAY.

A PART OF ME *WELCOMED* SUFFERING THAT NIGHT. *SURRENDERED* TO THE FAMILIAR SPASMS. THE BURNING IN MY GUT. THE NERVE-SHREDDING PAIN, RIPPLING THROUGH EVERY INCH OF MY BODY.

I'D LIVED WITH THAT PAIN SINCE BIRTH. PART OF THE FLAWS IN WARREN'S CLONING PROCESS. IN *ME*.

HAPPINESS? I THOUGHT, AS THE WAVES OF AGONY SUBSIDED.

A DANGEROUS CONCEPT.

MEANT FOR OTHER MEN, PERHAPS.

YORKER

BUT NOT FOR *KAINE*.

LOOKIT YERSELF, *TANNEN* --

-- LAYIN' THERE READIN' YOUR MAGAZINE LIKE SOME *WOMAN*.

ZAT WHAT YOU ARE, BIGSHOT? A *WOMAN*?

WELL, I'LL *TELL* YA, LOTS OF GUYS LOCKED UP IN HERE'D LIKE T'MAKE A PRETTY THING LIKE YOU THEIR *WIFE*.

DON'T TALK T'*ME* LIKE THAT, SCUM!

NOBODY TALKS TO *VINCENT TANNEN* LIKE THAT!

SO..?

GOT THE WORD, MISTER T. DEED'S *DONE*. RAVEN'S WIFE IS *DEAD*.

WHAT ABOUT THE *KID*?

LOOKS LIKE HE'S GONNA MAKE IT.

NOT *GOOD* ENOUGH. YOU TELL OUR... *FRIEND* THAT I'M GONNA HANDLE THIS ONE --

-- IN PERSON.

HOW YOU GONNA DO *THAT*, LOCKED AWAY IN HERE?

DON'T ASK *QUESTIONS*. JUST PASS THE MESSAGE ON.

WHAT-EVER YOU *SAY*, MISTER T.

SWEAR T'*GOD*, SCUM -- YOU *EVER* TALK T' ME LIKE THAT AGAIN I'LL DROP YOU WHERE YOU *STAND*!

WHERE YOU *STAND* -- *Y'HEAR ME*?!

HELENE WAS STILL BREATHING WHEN THEY BROUGHT HER TO THE HOSPITAL.

BUT SHE DIDN'T LAST THE NIGHT.

MATTHEW WAS GOING TO SURVIVE. BUT WHAT KIND OF A LIFE WOULD IT BE FOR HIM, WITH BOTH HIS PARENTS DEAD?

MAKE NO MISTAKE, I WAS AS DEAD AS MY WIFE. ONLY DIFFERENCE WAS, TANNEN MURDERED ME...

...AND LEFT ME ALIVE TO **KNOW** IT.

GUESS **THAT** WAS WHAT HE WAS AFTER ALL ALONG. I MADE HIS WORLD A **PRISON** -- AND HE MADE MINE A **TOMB.**

BUT IT WASN'T **TANNEN** I WAS ANGRY AT THAT MORNING. IT WASN'T TANNEN I HELD **RESPONSIBLE.**

JAKE..?

IT WAS GOD HIMSELF.

-- WILLIAM SCHOPF, A PALEOBIOLOGIST AT UCLA --

--FOUND FOSSILIZED IMPRINTS OF A THRIVING MICROBIAL COMMUNITY SANDWICHED BETWEEN LAYERS OF ROCK --

-- A COMMUNITY ESTIMATED TO BE THREE-POINT-FIVE ***BILLION*** YEARS OLD.

THIS... ALONG WITH THE OTHER EVIDENCE WE'VE DISCUSSED... INDICATES THAT LIFE WAS WELL ESTABLISHED ***ONLY*** A BILLION YEARS AFTER THE EARTH'S FORMATION.

A MUCH ***FASTER*** EVOLUTION THAN WE'VE PREVIOUSLY ASSUMED.

THIS DISCOVERY HAS SPURRED SOME IN THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY TO BELIEVE THAT... UNDER THE CORRECT LABORATORY CONDITIONS... IT MAY ACTUALLY BE POSSIBLE --

-- TO ***CREATE LIFE.***

BUT ***POSSIBILITIES*** ARE ONE THING... ***MORAL RESPONSIBILITIES*** QUITE ANOTHER. AND I, FOR ONE, FEEL THAT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ***DEVOID*** OF MORALITY CAN ONLY LEAD TO ***DISASTER.***

WE'LL DISCUSS WHAT ***YOU*** THINK IN OUR NEXT CLASS. THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY. THANKS FOR ***LISTENING.***

EXCELLENT WORK, MISTER REILLY. BUT I'D EXPECT NO LESS FROM A YOUNG MAN RECOMMENDED BY ***SEWARD TRAINER.***

SO I CAN STAY ON AS YOUR ***ASSISTANT?***

WITHOUT QUESTION.

I'LL SEE YOU IN MY OFFICE TOMORROW MORNING--

--SEVEN-THIRTY SHARP... AND WE'LL GO OVER THE CURRICULUM IN MORE DETAIL.

THANK YOU, PROFESSOR WHITE.

YOU'RE MOST WELCOME, MISTER REILLY.

First day on the job went better than I'd dreamed -- and I was feeling pretty PLEASED with myself.

Started to imagine what it would be like to make teaching my career.

Challenging young minds, I decided, was far more valuable than wrapping myself up like the Mummy and punching out lowlifes.

But then I remembered that the credentials that GOT me the job were all fraudulent. Not just my credentials --

-- my very IDENTITY.

Clones, I reminded myself, don't have careers. No, I'd stick around Salt Lake for a month or so, pocket some cash...

HEY!

...and then hit the road again.

HEY -- JANINE!

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

LOOK, I... ah... I KNOW WE WERE SUPPOSED TO GO *OUT* LAST NIGHT... BUT uh... SOMETHING CAME UP -- A LAST MINUTE *EMERGENCY* --

-- AND I REALIZED I DIDN'T HAVE YOUR *PHONE NUMBER*, AND --

Oh, LOOK... ANYTHING I SAY'S GONNA SOUND LIKE A LAME EXCUSE. AND IT PROBABLY *IS*.

I'M *REALLY* SORRY. DO YOU... UM... DO YOU THINK WE COULD MAYBE...

Y'KNOW, YOU'VE REALLY GOT THIS *SINCERITY* THING DOWN TO A SCIENCE.

THAT MEAN I CAN TAKE YOU TO *DINNER* TONIGHT?

NO.

"IT MEANS YOU CAN TAKE ME TO *LUNCH*. RIGHT *NOW*."

She told me later that she had no idea why she SAID that -- when what she WANTED to do was walk away. "BUT... ALL OF A SUDDEN... LOOKING IN YOUR EYES WAS LIKE LOOKING IN THE EYES OF MY OLDEST AND DEAREST FRIEND."

I knew exactly what she meant.

I don't believe in reincarnation -- but I swear it was like we'd known each other in a previous life... and we were simply picking up where we'd left off, a thousand years, a thousand TIMES, before.

And so the man who claimed that his life was a fraud, that he could never allow himself to be intimately connected with another human being... TO LOVE...

...handed over his heart without a fight.

TROLLEY SQUARE

But, as that magical week went on, I was constantly aware of an undercurrent of fear... for EACH of us, I later discovered.

SECRETS that couldn't be shared. WORDS that went unspoken.

MASKS that never came off.

Janine made me feel like a normal MAN... capable of living a normal LIFE. So why did I find myself, each night after I left her apartment, crawling into every dark corner of Salt Lake City...

...waging a one-man war against Vincent Tannen's organization...

...stopping Drug Shipments... Arms Deliveries... pulling his mob apart, piece by piece?

WAS it my sense of responsibility? The part of me that wanted to make sure that no more innocents like Helene Raven were trampled under Tannen's bootheels?

Or was it the mystery of the night... the love of danger... the search for THRILLS?

Or maybe I was so terrified of what was happening so QUICKLY with Janine... that I NEEDED to hide behind a mask...

...secure in the Spider's loneliness.

AMAZING, ISN'T IT?

HOP IN THE CAR AND IN TEN MINUTES YOU LEAVE THE CITY BEHIND. YOU'RE UP HERE, ON TOP OF THE WORLD.

ABOVE ALL THE STRUGGLE AND SUFFERING. THE BLOOD AND ANGUISH.

LOOK AT THE **STARS**, LOUISE --

-- GREAT FLAMING LIGHTS... FIGHTING AGAINST THE DARKNESS OF THE NIGHT SKY.

THAT'S **YOU**. MY LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.

I DON'T **KNOW**, KAINE. I THINK **MY** LIGHT DIED --

-- A LONG TIME AGO.

NO.

WE'VE GOT NOTHING TO *HIDE* FROM EACH OTHER. WE'RE *BOTH* SCARRED.

WE'RE *NOT* THE SAME, LOUISE. DON'T *EVER* SAY THAT. YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHO I AM. *WHAT* I AM.

THAT'S WHY WE'RE *TOGETHER*, ISN'T IT? BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT WE'RE THE *SAME*?

YES, I *DO*.

YOU'RE THE *NIGHT SKY*. YOU'RE THE *DARKNESS*.

AND THAT'S WHY I *LOVE* YOU.

FOR ONE NIGHT, MY HEART FLAMED LIKE A DISTANT STAR... ILLUMINATED EVERY CORNER OF MY WRETCHED SOUL. FOR ONE NIGHT...

...I WAS HAPPY.

THE UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER OFFERED THE BEST CARE IN SALT LAKE CITY.

BUT ALL THE DOCTORS IN THE WORLD COULDN'T DO FOR MATTHEW WHAT HIS **FATHER** COULD.

SO WHY WASN'T I IN THERE, AT MY SON'S BEDSIDE, HOLDING HIM IN MY ARMS, WHISPERING WORDS OF COMFORT AND LOVE?

WHY HADN'T I VISITED HIM **ONCE** SINCE THE BOMBING?

WAS I AFRAID OF LOOKING IN HIS EYES -- SO LIKE HIS MOTHER'S -- AND SEEING HELENE STARING BACK AT ME?

OR WAS I EVEN MORE AFRAID OF LETTING MATTHEW SEE ME (HIS POLICEMAN FATHER, HIS PILLAR OF STRENGTH)...

...BROKEN AND WOUNDED...

...STRIPPED OF ALL FAITH?

A week of magic... of love too sacred to be spoken. I'd never known anything like it. Not with Mary Jane, not even with Gwen.

Yet, beneath the magic, the fear was always there. The secrets.

NO.

NO?

Y-YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, BEN. BUT I CAN'T.

I JUST...

I CAN'T.

THIS HAS TO STOP. NOW.

THE SHADOWS OF THE PAST.

GOODBYE, BEN.

I didn't ask why.

Didn't think I DESERVED to. Who was I to expect love to last? Who was I to grasp at happiness?

Better to be alone in the night, high above the world...

...I could never truly be a PART of.

NOOO!

KAINE -- WHAT IS IT?

SPASMS. BURNING IN MY GUT. NERVE-SHREDDING PAIN...

...RIPPLING THROUGH EVERY INCH OF MY BODY.

KRUKK

SHAKK

WHAT'S WRONG--?

I'D LIVED WITH IT EVERY MINUTE OF EVERY DAY SINCE I CRAWLED UP OUT OF WARREN'S CLONING VATS.

MAKE IT STOP.

BUT NEVER LIKE THIS.

MAKE IT

STOP!

KRASH

NICE WORK, BOYS.

VERY NICE.

YOU'RE MAKIN' ME A HAPPY MAN. AN' IF *JIMMY "THE MOUTH"* IS HAPPY --

-- THEN HIS *UNCLE VINCENT* IS HAPPY. AN' IF UNCLE VINCENT'S HAPPY --

-- EVERYONE STAYS *ALIVE.*

EVERYONE, THAT IS --

-- EXCEPT THE POOR FOOLS WHO ARE SHOOTING THAT JUNK INTO THEIR *VEINS.*

WHAT ABOUT *THEM,* JIMMY-BOY?

WHO THE #%$!!?

KUPF

TUK

WHAT ABOUT THEM?!

I was lying.

I didn't give a damn about Tannen's victims. All I cared about was me.

For three unbearable years, I'd been riding a river of rage and frustration...

CHAKK

SPAKK

...and that night the river overflowed its banks. Became a FLOOD of blood and broken bones.

It was only when I realized how much I was ENJOYING it...

...that I pulled back.

POWER -- that's what it came down to, wasn't it?

POWER -- and RESPONSIBILITY.

MY responsibility.

Oh, GEEZ... Oh, GEEZ... Oh --

MY GOD!

Whether I liked it or not.

REILEEE!

...AND *PAIN* WOULD BECOME TOO *SMALL* A WORD.

KAINE--?

DON'T *HURT* ME! I'M *BEGGIN'* YA -- *P-PLEASE* -- DON'T *HURT* ME!

PROFESSOR WARREN HAD *WARNED* ME. TOLD ME THE DAY WOULD COME WHEN MY CELLULAR DEGENERATION WOULD *ACCELERATE*.

WHEN MY FLESH WOULD SPLIT AND CANKER...

AND NOW THAT IT HAD FINALLY *HAPPENED*...

...I NEEDED A *RECEPTACLE* FOR THAT PAIN.

KUPF

SOMEONE TO SUFFER *WITH* ME. BURN *WITH* ME.

I NEEDED *REILLY*.

KAINE -- WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?* WHY ARE YOU --

SHUT UP!

I KNEW WHO HE TRULY WAS, EVEN IF *HE* DIDN'T: NOT A CLONE LIKE ME -- BUT *A MAN!*

A *NORMAL MAN* WHO'D NEVER EXPERIENCE THE DEGENERATION, THE SUFFERING AND HUMILIATION, THAT I WAS.

SHUT UP!

IT WAS THEN, I THINK, THAT OUR WAR TRULY BEGAN. IT WAS THEN I REALIZED...

...HOW MUCH I *LOATHED* HIM.

RUNNER

KILLING HIM, I DECIDED, WOULD BE TOO EASY.

SKLUK

FOR BOTH OF US.

I VOWED TO DEVOTE THE REST OF MY DAYS TO TORMENTING HIM. DENYING HIM HAPPINESS.

RATCH

WH

SHARING MY PAIN.

SO YER FRIEND LEFT YA *ALIVE*, Huh? LET'S SEE WHAT I CAN DO T'FIX --

-- THAT.

Uh-uh, JIMBO.

KLIK

K- KENNEDY?!

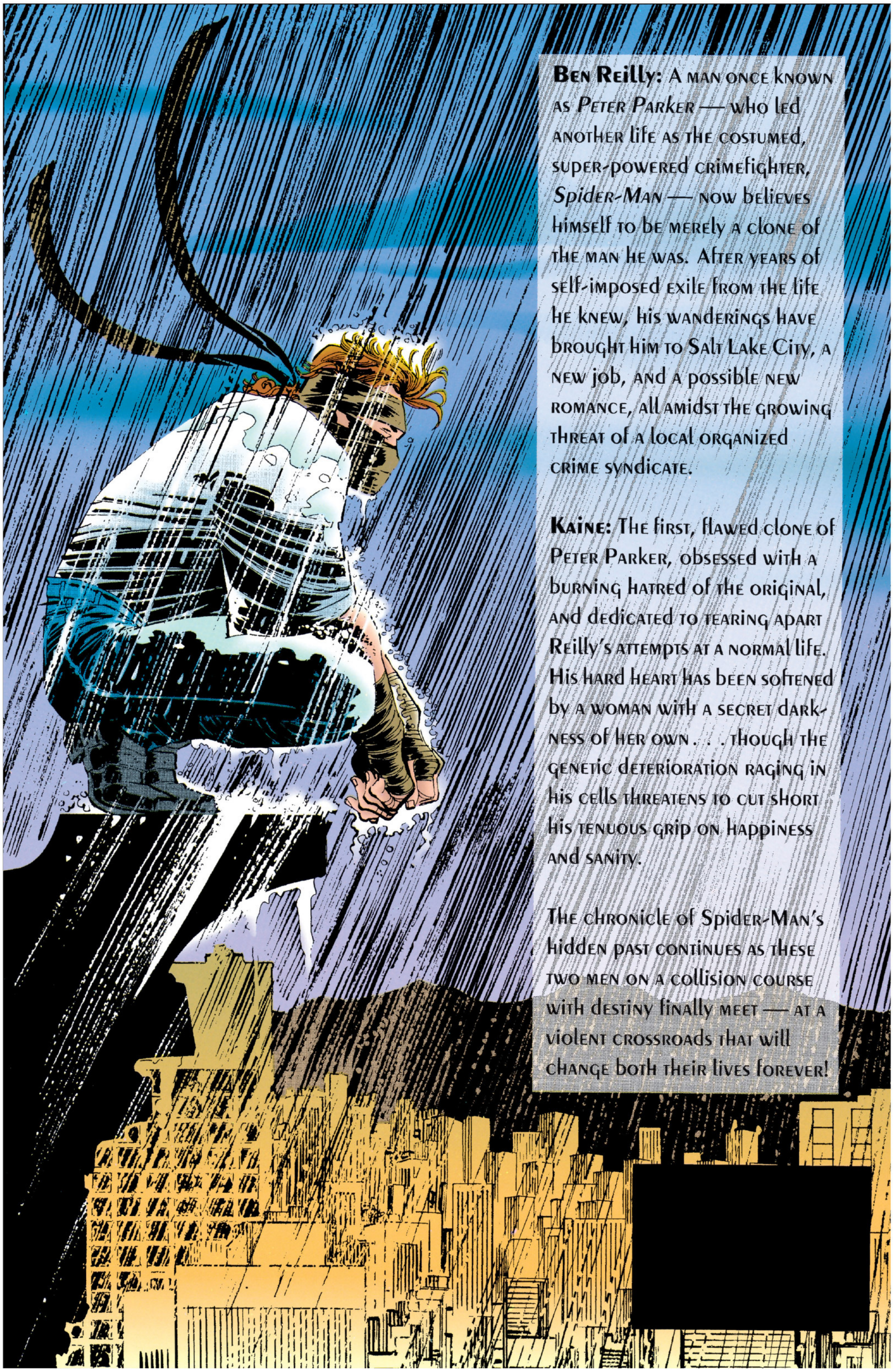
YOU'RE NOT GONNA KILL HIM.

I AM.

I THINK YOU'D LIKE THAT... *WOULDN'T* YOU --

"-- MISTER TANNEN?"

LOST YEARS CONCLUDES NEXT MONTH!


Ben Reilly: A man once known as *Peter Parker* — who led another life as the costumed, super-powered crimefighter, *Spider-Man* — now believes himself to be merely a clone of the man he was. After years of self-imposed exile from the life he knew, his wanderings have brought him to Salt Lake City, a new job, and a possible new romance, all amidst the growing threat of a local organized crime syndicate.
Kaine: The first, flawed clone of Peter Parker, obsessed with a burning hatred of the original, and dedicated to tearing apart Reilly's attempts at a normal life. His hard heart has been softened by a woman with a secret darkness of her own . . . though the genetic deterioration raging in his cells threatens to cut short his tenuous grip on happiness and sanity.
The chronicle of Spider-Man's hidden past continues as these two men on a collision course with destiny finally meet — at a violent crossroads that will change both their lives forever!